



Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
February 18, 2014
By Leslie Simoes, Executive Director, The Arc Connecticut

Testimony: H.B. No. 5030 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE
EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015.

Thank you Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee for the opportunity to testify this evening on H.B. No. 5030 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2015.

My Name is Leslie Simoes and I am the executive director of The Arc Connecticut. The Arc is a 61-year old advocacy organization committed to protecting the basic civil basic rights of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and to promoting opportunities for their full inclusion in the life of their communities. We have 18 chapters throughout Connecticut providing direct support and services. We rose from family grass roots advocacy and have hundreds of families and individuals with disabilities actively involved in our Arc family. Most recently The Arc Connecticut in conjunction with the newly formed Connecticut Intellectual & Developmental Disability (I/DD) Caucus hosted a Family Day and over 350 families, advocates, individuals with disabilities and providers came to the capitol to tell their stories.

Unfortunately the Governor's proposed budget adjustments does nothing to address the hundreds of stories told to legislators last week and The Arc Connecticut is concerned about items presented specifically in the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) portion of the budget.

While The Arc is grateful to the Governor because he made no major cuts to the DDS budget, he is leaving previous cuts intact and continuously implementing the chronic starvation of the provider network making it next to impossible for families with children or adult children with I/DD in Connecticut to live their lives to the fullest potential.

The Arc Connecticut supports DDS Commissioner Macy's direction and vision for the department and commends the administration with many new family centered, person driven initiatives. The mission of DDS to partner with individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, and to create opportunities for individuals to fully participate as members of their communities, is not only morally and fundamentally in alignment with national trends, but a mission that can be achieved with adequate resources.

That being said, without adequate resources the department, no matter what the vision or mission, cannot and will not be able to meet the needs of families in Connecticut. The continued underfunding and slow starvation of this support system is often painful for all who rely on and who provide these services without the adequate resources, fully supporting the essential and fundamental needs of individuals and families will continue to go unmet.

There are numerous things to consider here:

- There has been no new money for families on the combined DDS residential waiting and planning list since June 2009 when a litigation settlement agreement concluded. There are many families on the waiting list now who have been a Priority 1 for 8+ years and there is no sign of assistance on the way. The number of families on these 2 lists is increasing constantly.
- How Connecticut supports individuals with I/DD is changing. The system was created on an expensive, outdated institutional model of support that cannot sustain itself. DDS is working diligently to improve and transform systems of support but without the resources needed from the state this task is next to impossible.
- Funding for supports and services are at risk on a federal level.
- We are facing an imminent crisis of increased demand as children on the autism spectrum with I.Q.'s higher than Connecticut's eligibility statute allows will be aging out of the school system at an alarming rate into an already fragile support system.
- The state of Connecticut budget projections for the next biennium are not good and giving more money to The Department of Developmental Services budget of 1 billion dollars seems highly unlikely.
- For many years providers have been told to do more with less. Providers have been struggling for years to maintain quality supports for the people they serve and their concerns have gone unheard.
- DDS is mandating families do more support with less resources while cutting and reducing the in-home supports they rely on, such as Family Support Grants, & Respite Services

The DDS budget is a little over 1 billion dollars and supports approximately 21,000 people. DDS spends approximately \$380,000 per year per resident for 353 individuals living at Southbury Training School, over \$400,000 per person per year for 191 individuals living at the 5 DDS Regional Centers and \$0.00 on residential supports for approximately 1,700 families on the DDS Residential Waiting and Planning Lists.

DDS HAS the resources but they need to look at HOW they spend money and how we can reallocate existing resources in ways that can not only fully support all families in need across Connecticut but for the providers that support them.

You will hear testimony from many families tonight about how they feel the system is failing them. You will hear testimony tonight from Arc agencies and other DDS provider agencies about the specific details of reduced Medicaid reimbursement rates impacting provider's ability to support those in need, chronic underfunding, unfunded mandates and the ability for providers in the state to maintain small businesses in the state of Connecticut.

Every legislator has constituents either receiving DDS services, waiting for DDS services or being underserved by DDS or a combination of all three. This is statewide systemic issue that crosses all socioeconomic, gender, race and geographic boundaries. The Arc Connecticut asks the Appropriations Committee to listen to Connecticut families and providers and work with us to create a system of support that meets the needs of every Connecticut resident.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions, for clarification or to arrange a visit with a family or private provider of community based services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in your area. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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